BRITISH COLUMBIA
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Education Report

StrongStart Centre Opens in Prince George

The Spruceland Elementary StrongStart Centre is now officially open. It offers a free drop-in program for parents or caregivers and their preschool-age children. Qualified early childhood educators provide pre-literacy activities – including stories, music, art and puzzles – that help children develop reading skills and get ready for success in kindergarten, school and life. Read more.

Education Minister Shirley Bond presents the Spruceland Elementary StrongStart Centre sign.

HOT TOPIC

B.C. students are among the best in the country. On the 2004 Student Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) science tests for 13- and 16-year-old Canadian students, only Alberta scored higher than British Columbia.

But while student achievement has improved since 2001, results have levelled off. School completion rates have remained unchanged for the last four years, and in the case of Aboriginal and ESL students, completion rates declined slightly last year.

More than 11,000 students fail to finish Grade 12 each year. If this continues, the number of students who will not finish school between now and 2010 could fill a city the size of Penticton.

One in four students started kindergarten this year without the developmental skills needed to succeed – that's nearly 9,000 students each year.

We need to look for new ways to ensure students graduate from high school, and ways to provide preschool children with the skills they need to succeed in school.

How is that done? By thinking about education differently.

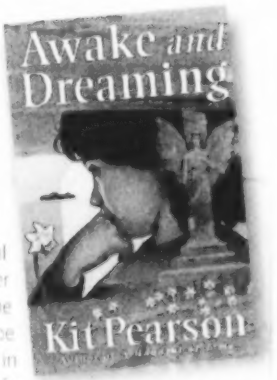
Education doesn't begin at kindergarten and end at Grade 12. It doesn't take place only in a classroom or a school. It doesn't start at 9 and finish at 3.

Education involves the community: students, teachers, support staff, parents, businesses, grandparents, employees and trustees. . . in fact everyone.

Now is the time for all of B.C.'s education partners to consider new and innovative strategies that will help students in B.C. reach even higher levels of achievement.

Reading Corner

Ever dream of being part of a different family? That dream feels real to nine-year-old Theo, who, while on the ferry, moving from her mother's in Vancouver to the care of her aunt in Victoria, makes the wish. When the luster peels off her fantasy, Theo has to learn to be happy and thankful for the people and moments of joy already in her life. This Governor-General's-Award-winning book is suitable for students in grades 3-7.



Awake and Dreaming
Kit Pearson

Message from Minister Shirley Bond

Honourable Shirley Bond Minister of Education

Happy New Year!

I look forward to 2007, a year in which we will continue to explore new ways to improve student achievement. On that front, noted B.C. educator Dr. Charles Jago has provided some helpful advice.

Dr. Jago, a former president of the University of Northern British Columbia, released a report in December entitled "Working Together to Improve Performance: Preparing BC's Public Education System for the Future."

B.C.'s education system is among the best in the world. The question is "How do you make a good system better?"

Dr. Jago offers six suggestions:

(1) Continue to stress accountability through planning, partnerships and public reports.

(2) Support individual schools and districts to develop strategies to help improve individual student achievement.

(3) Empower and assist districts to enhance community literacy by embracing everything from preschool-age programs on, by making schools multi-purpose facilities, and by developing a culture of literacy.

(4) Step up K–12 and post-secondary cooperation to ease student transitions and expand post-secondary programs in high schools, especially for students interested in the trades.

(5) Continue districtwide testing and use evidence to plan for improvements.

(6) Put funds toward strategic programs that will lead to better individual student and system outcomes.

The report has much to contribute to our discussion about how to improve student achievement. Read the BC Progress Board's news release, executive summary or full report.